

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 20, 2009

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael B. Enzi
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Enzi:

We strongly urge you to hold a hearing on the breast cancer screening recommendations made by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF). These recommendations, which have been widely criticized by patients and doctors alike, could prove devastating for women at risk for breast cancer. The American people deserve to know more about how this task force came to its controversial findings.

As you are aware, on November 16, 2009 the USPSTF revised its recommendations regarding breast cancer screening, advising women between the ages of 40 and 49 against receiving a routine mammography completely. The USPSTF also advised women ages 50 and over to receive a mammography just once every two years. These recommendations stand in stark contrast to the advice of doctors around the country, and from numerous groups such as the American Cancer Society, which recommends that women over 40 receive a mammography each year to screen for breast cancer. Additionally, it represents a dramatic departure from the task force's previous recommendations, which urged women aged 40 or older to receive a screening mammography as often as once a year.

The American Cancer Society estimates that over 40,000 Americans will die from breast cancer in 2009, and breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths among women in the United States. Breast cancer screenings and advances in technology have reduced the mortality rate of patients who develop this devastating disease, but early detection of breast cancer is absolutely critical. To alter these recommendations, and to contradict the advice provided by countless doctors, will only serve to cause confusion and alter the behavior of patients, many of whom may be at a high risk of contracting breast cancer.

We urge you to schedule a hearing on the breast cancer screening recommendations made by the USPSTF before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. The American people are seeking answers from their representatives in Washington and want to

know if the Commission's startling findings will put more patients at greater risk for this deadly disease.

Sincerely,

Lisa Moulton

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